

**RELATIONSHIPS BETWEEN JOB RELATED COMPETENCY,  
COMMUNICATION COMPETENCY, AGREEABLENESS, JOB  
SATISFACTION AND INTENTION TO STAY IN SPA INDUSTRY  
AMONG SPA THERAPISTS IN MALAYSIA**

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MALAYSIA**

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## DECLARATION

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I hereby declare that this dissertation is the result of my own work, except for quotations and summaries which have been duly acknowledged.

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## **ABSTRACT**

The emergence of the spa industry had created job and economic opportunities formation, specifically for the tourism industry to lead as discussed in the 2012 Global Spa and Wellness Summit in Bali. The spa industry has contributed more than \$106 billion in the wellness tourism globally, and had generated more revenue than any other sector in the tourism industry. In Malaysia, the spa industry has increased to over 200% since 2002 and has the potential to continuously grow. Under the Malaysian Economic Transformation Program (ETP), the spa industry is earmarked as one of the twelve initiatives budgeted for tourism development. However, the industry is not without its problems. Besides competition from other tourism sectors and also from neighbouring countries, the spa industry in Malaysia needs to address issues which include the shortage of therapist expertise and providing excellent service. It was reported that the “lack of talent” in the spa industry is caused by high staff turnover when compared with the other services in the tourism industry. Only a few studies were conducted on the matter through its contribution to the industry, while holistically, the human capital development is equally important in supporting the tourism industry in Malaysia. This study explores factors that consists of job satisfaction, job related and communication competencies and agreeableness among spa therapists which may influence their intention to stay. The research methodology for this study explained the research design that includes sampling, questionnaire design, data collection procedures, proposed research framework, and techniques of data analysis. The sample technique chosen for this study is disproportionate stratified random sampling method. A self-administered methodology approach were deployed to collect data of the respondents comprised of spa therapists who work with registered hotels and resort spas in Malaysia. A small scale data collected during the pilot test of this study has been analysed for the validity and reliability test. The results of the study revealed that only communication competency has a significant positive direct relationship with intention to stay. In contrast, job related competency and agreeableness have insignificant direct relationship. However, job satisfaction mediated the relationship between job related competency, communication competency and agreeableness and intention to stay among spa therapists in Malaysia. In future, this study can be carry out by considering other type of position in spa industry, to strike a balance. Longitudinal studies also been proposed in order to have a better understanding of behaviour of spa therapist over a long period of time. Other suggestion, future study can investigate the possible use of other motivational factors as a moderating variable. Similarly, this study suggests future study to investigate the possible use of other personality factors such as conscientiousness, neuroticism, openness to experience, and extraversion as well with other competencies variables as the independent variables.

**Keywords:** Intention to Stay, Job Satisfaction, Job Related Competency, Communication Competency, Agreeableness

# **HUBUNGAN ANTARA KECEKAPAN BERKAITAN KERJA, KECEKAPAN BERKOMUNIKASI, DAN KEBERSETUJUAN DIKAITKAN DENGAN KEPUASAN KERJA DAN NIAT UNTUK KEKAL DALAM INDUSTRI DI KALANGAN AHLI TERAPI SPA DI MALAYSIA**

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**Ogos 2019**

## **ABSTRAK**

Kemunculan industri spa telah mewujudkan peluang pekerjaan dan peluang pembangunan ekonomi, khususnya terhadap pembangunan industri pelancongan seperti yang dibincangkan dalam Persidangan Global Spa and Wellness di Bali dalam tahun 2012. Industri spa menyumbang sejumlah lebih daripada \$106 billion dalam sektor pelancongan di seluruh dunia, dan menjana pendapatan lebih daripada sektor lain dalam industri pelancongan. Industri spa Malaysia telah meningkat kepada lebih 200% sejak tahun 2002 dan mempunyai potensi untuk terus berkembang. Di bawah Program Transformasi Ekonomi Malaysia (ETP), industri spa adalah salah satu daripada dua belas inisiatif diperuntukkan bagi pembangunan pelancongan. Walau bagaimanapun, industri ini tidak terlepas dari masalah. Selain persaingan daripada lain-lain sektor pelancongan dan juga dari negara-negara jiran, industri spa di Malaysia perlu berdepan dengan isu kekurangan kepakaran ahli terapi dan memberikan perkhidmatan yang cemerlang. "Kekurangan bakat" dalam industri spa disebabkan oleh keperluan kakitangan yang tinggi jika dibandingkan dengan perkhidmatan lain dalam industri pelancongan. Hanya beberapa kajian telah dijalankan berkaitan dengan perkara itu melalui sumbangannya kepada industri, manakala secara holistik, pembangunan modal insan adalah penting dalam menyokong industri pelancongan di Malaysia. Kajian ini meneroka faktor seperti kepuasan kerja, kecekapan berkaitan kerja, kecekapan komunikasi dan kebersetujuan di kalangan ahli terapi spa yang boleh mempengaruhi niat untuk kekal dalam industri. Metodologi kajian ini menjelaskan reka bentuk penyelidikan yang merangkumi persampelan, reka bentuk soal selidik, prosedur pengumpulan data, rangka kerja penyelidikan yang dicadangkan, dan teknik analisis data. Agihan secara berdepan digunakan bagi mengumpul data daripada responden yang terdiri daripada terapi spa yang bekerja di spa hotel dan resort di Malaysia. Data kecil yang dikumpul semasa ujian pra kajian telah dianalisis untuk ujian kebolehpercayaan. Hasil kajian menunjukkan hanya kecekapan komunikasi mempunyai hubungan langsung yang positif dengan niat untuk kekal. Sebaliknya, kecekapan berkaitan kerja dan kebersetujuan tidak mempunyai hubungan dengan niat untuk kekal. Selainnya, kepuasan kerja mengantara hubungan antara kecekapan berkaitan kerja, kecekapan komunikasi dan kebersetujuan dan niat untuk kekal di kalangan ahli terapi spa di Malaysia. Di masa akan datang, kajian ini boleh dijalankan dengan mempertimbangkan responden dari peringkat pengurusan spa. Kajian longitudinal juga dicadangkan agar dapat memahami perilaku ahli terapi spa dalam tempoh yang panjang. Kajian masa depan boleh mengkaji kemungkinan penggunaan faktor motivasi lain sebagai pemboleh ubah. Kajian ini mencadangkan untuk mengkaji kemungkinan penggunaan faktor keperibadian yang lain seperti ketelitian, neurotik, keterbukaan kepada pengalaman, dan bersemangat serta pembolehubah kecekapan lain.

**Kata kunci:** Niat untuk Kekal, Kepuasan Kerja, Kecekapan Berkaitan Kerja, Kecekapan Komunikasi, Kebersetujuan

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## LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

AGG	Agreeableness
AMOS	Analysis of a Moment Structures
AVE	Average Variance Extraction
CB-SEM	Covariance-Based SEM
CC	Communication Competency
CCS	Communicative Competence Scale
CFA	Confirmatory Factor Analysis
CR	Composite Reliability
EPP	Entry Point Project
ETP	Economic Transformational Program
GDP	Growth Domestic Product
GNI	Gross Net Income
GoF	Assessment of Goodness of Fit
HTMT	Heterotrait-Monotrait ratio
IS	Intention to Stay
ISPA	International Spa Association
ITBM	Institut Terjemahan & Buku Malaysia
JRC	Job Related Competency
JS	Job Satisfaction
LISREL	Linear Structural Relationship
MBTI	Myers Briggs Type Indicator Career Assessment Test
META	Measure of Entrepreneurial Tendencies and Abilities
MOTAC	Ministry of Tourism and Culture Malaysia
N	Number of sample
NKEA	National Key Economic Area
PLS	Partial Least Square
RM	Ringgit Malaysia
SCCT	Social Cognitive Career Theory
SD	Standard Deviation
SEM	Structural Equation Modelling

SKM	Sijil Kemahiran Malaysia
SME	Small-Medium Enterprise
SPSS	Statistical Package for the Social Sciences
TCM	Three-Component Model
VB-SEM	Variance-Based SEM
VIF	Variance Inflation Factor

## **CHAPTER 1**

### **INTRODUCTION**

#### **1.1 Background to the Study**

The spa industry has grown over the years and has created opportunities to lead in the tourism sector (Global Spa & Wellness Summit, 2011). The wellness tourism industry has contributed \$106 billion globally and had generated more income than medical tourism revenue contribution. The Global Spa and Wellness Summit in 2014 announced that the spa business has developed from \$60 billion in 2007 to \$94 billion of revenue in 2013 around the world. Moreover, in Malaysia, the spa business has grown over 200% since 2002 and can possibly persistently to develop in the future (Ministry of Tourism and Culture Malaysia, 2010).

The tourism industry is imperative for the Malaysian economic growth and had contributed to the Gross Domestic Products (GDP) for the past few years. Subsequently, the government has taken initiatives as stipulated in the Economy Transformational Plan (ETP) to enhance the tourism sector to be a high-yield industry (Nair, 2014).

The tourism industry in Malaysia had shown some significant results on the increase of 24.44 million inbound tourists to Malaysia in 2013 (Mosbah, 2014) and 25.9 million international tourists visited Malaysia in 2017 (Motac, 2018). The Ministry of Tourism and Culture of Malaysia (MOTAC) has launched the Economic Transformational Program (ETP) which realized the great potential of economic contribution to the country's tourism industries. Under the (ETP), twelve initiatives for tourism development that were drawn under five themes to enhance the tourism industry. The emphasis on spa industry was laid along with the other four themes; namely events, entertainment, spa and sports. MOTAC estimated that the spa industry could produce 3,540 job openings by 2020 and estimated that the Gross Net Income (GNI) of RM344.1 million. In the first phase, 1,500 local spa therapists will be trained under a specific skilled enhancement program known as 'Career Progression of Spa Therapist' conducted by the Ministry of Tourism and Culture Malaysia (Bulletin 1Motac, 2014).

The purpose of the ETP towards the development of the spa industry is to reduce on the numbers of foreign therapists and instead create new job opportunities for locals in the Malaysian tourism industry. However, the numbers of local spa therapists currently still did not meet the market demands as it is found to be lower than it is supposed to in order for the spas to operate at an optimal level (MOTAC, 2012). As a solution, the government allowed 66 spas to employ foreign therapists with a total of up to 257 therapists from Thailand and Indonesia.

Nair (2014) likewise recommended that the tourism industry in Malaysia to provide an additional number of professional experts for the spa industry due to the inadequacy in economic contribution, as compared to the other divisions in the tourism industry. This issue is being highlighted in Global Spa and Wellness Summit (2012). Accordingly, the greatest challenge for the spa industry is the “lack of professional human resources” to work in the spa industry (Global Spa & Wellness Summit, 2012). The deficiency could be because of the spa advisor maintenance issue or the business is not extremely alluring regarding compensation or occupation fulfilment (Global Spa and Wellness Summit, 2012). Cohen (2008) postulated that the spa industry has a high staff turnover compared to other services in the hospitality industry. He further recommended that a spa business must be supported by therapists with professional skills and qualifications. Therefore, human capital is the key element in retention of workers as well as imperative, especially when the investment cost in recruitment and training is high.

The retention strategies could be accomplished by examining the individual factors that can lead them to remain or leave the profession (Brown, 2013). In order to retain them, it is vital that the therapists should be contented with their job achievements and rewards. Past studies indicated that it is important for workers to be retained in the organization by avoiding turnover; otherwise the organization will risk losing good talents with knowledge and experience. This is essential for the organisation to remain competitive which will affect their profitability (Ramlall, 2004; Acton, 2003). This has been supported in a recent study by AlBattat (2013) who stated that employees’ dissatisfaction and turnover crises among the Malaysians could be found in the hospitality and tourism industry, while it is known that

employees' satisfaction with their working environment is important in order to gain their commitment and intention to stay, thus making it a vital contribution to the Malaysian economy. AlBattat (2013) also cited from Foong (2008) and Richardson & Butler (2011) that satisfied employees would influence employee's intention to stay and will affect the services quality rendered, leading to customers' satisfaction.

However, past studies have indicated that the rewards were very competitive (Othman, 2011) however, the lack of interest by therapists to work in the spa industry are because of the working conditions and unpleasant pay when compared to other industries, and consequently this brought about the inaccessibility of spa therapist and turnover (Joppe, 2010).

The fifth annual Global Spa Summit in 2011 highlighted that India and China are the fastest growing industries in Asia pursued next by Indonesia thus omitting Malaysia's spa industry growth. The growth of the spa industry in Indonesia had come to up to 7%, after China at 9% and India at 11 % in 2010. It is also additionally referenced in Thaiways (2012) through the spa industry surveys & Spa Consumer Surveys, Indonesia's spa industry was positioned number 2 (19%) after Thailand (22%) trailed by Malaysia (13%) as the potential spa holiday destinations. In terms of the skilled workforce, a survey led by Stenden University of Applied Sciences in a joint effort with Rangsit University and Thai Spa Association in Spa Industry Study: "Opening the Spa Doors to ASEAN 2014", indicated that compared to other countries, Thailand has higher skilled spa therapists followed by Indonesia while Malaysia was rated lower than these two countries.



The result of the availability of the therapist is also similar to the skilled therapist comparison by countries which indicated that Thailand and Indonesia have the highest number of talents, trailed by Singapore and Malaysia. With respect to this issue, it is essential to conduct a study pertaining to the factors that influences spa therapists intention to stay as the progress is still far behind compared to other Asian countries such as Indonesia and Thailand which has attained a higher rank in the spa industry compared to Malaysia, not only in terms of growth in the industry, but also the availability of skilled spa therapists. This study is vital because it delivers an opportunity to observe the applicability of personality trait, competencies and job satisfaction constructs whether it can provide a great impact to ensure the availability of skilled spa therapists in Malaysia by considering their intention to stay issue.

Thus, a study in this area is important to the industry and employees, particularly in discovering how to retain the talents in the industry. What can lure them to remain in the industry? What are the attributes that can make them stay in the industry? Few studies were conducted to answer these questions. There were past studies done on the issues discussed, however, the focus was in other industries such as insurance, commodity, accounting, and engineering and their focus was on the aspect of employees' personality, job related and communication competencies and staff retention (Judeh, 2012; Karavardar, 2013; Özer, 2010; Hofaidhllaoui, 2014).

## **1.2 Problem Statement**

It is vital to retain spa therapists in the industry as it has a high staff turnover as posited by Cohen (2008). The lack of professional spa therapists was emphasized in

the pre-launching of the Malaysia's ETP program and Global Spa and Wellness Summit 2011 which was held in Bali, Indonesia. It is essential to encourage spa therapists to remain in their jobs due to the high cost of new recruitment and training. Besides the monetary loss, Sandhya (2011) argued that loss of talents can also cause an organisation to lose valuable information, customers, and their skills. It is also vital to enhance the spa therapists' profession as the industry has gigantic income potential in Malaysia which underpins the Malaysian government's efforts to improve the spa industry in accordance with the ETP program.

Unfortunately, not much attention has been given to the issue of intention to stay among the spa therapists in the spa industry specifically in Malaysia. According to Dr Baskaran Koshti the president of Malaysia Spa and Wellness Association, through The Star Online on June 2017, although the spa industry in Malaysia is growing but it was still lacking of 3,000 local spa therapist. A year later, Dr Baskaran Koshti still highlighted the same issues to The Star Online on July 2018 emphasised that although almost two million people were involved in the beauty and wellness industry, additional numbers of 6,000 of skilful local therapist is still needed to cater the spa industry demand in Malaysia.

Past researches recommended that the lack of spa therapist could be due to the spa therapist reluctance to remain in the spa industry or the unattractiveness of the spa industry in terms of reward or job satisfaction (Global Spa & Wellness Summit, 2012). Past studies also indicated that job satisfaction as a wide contributor to intention to stay. For example, AbuAlrub (2016) found the correlation between job

satisfaction and intention to stay among nurses in Jordan. The correlation supported by Alfred (2016) who also posited that the experienced nurses were more satisfied with the job and lead to their intention to remain instead of less experienced nurses. Past studies also indicated that Herzberg's motivation and hygiene theory which described the presence of motivating factors would bring about job satisfaction as the set back on hygiene factors would result in job dissatisfaction (Ramlall, 2004; Samuel, 2009). In the spa industry, Wetprasit's (2006) study on the impacts of work-related determinants on job satisfaction and retention intentions in the Thailand spa industry found that job retention would increase in line with therapist job satisfaction. Past studies also suggested that job satisfaction can act as a mediator. For example, a study conducted by Karavardar (2013) on Turkey's commodity industry discovered that job satisfaction has a mediating effect between human resources management practices and turnover intention. A similar result was found in Eckhardt (2014) study which posited that job satisfaction as a mediator to measure the relationship between personality traits and turnover intention among Information Technology workers. A further support for the mediating role of job satisfaction has been determined by Hofaidhllaoui (2014) which found there are no support for job satisfaction as a moderator variable in the relationship between job satisfaction and turnover.

Therefore, with the various findings of the relationship between job satisfaction and intention to stay, it is fundamental for this study to determine the pattern of this relationship amongst spa therapists in Malaysia. Perhaps, from the outcome of this study, job satisfaction role as a mediator could clearly explain the relationship between factors that can lead to intention to stay among spa therapists in Malaysia.

Attention also been given to competencies variables in order to predict intention to stay mediates by job satisfaction amongst spa therapists in Malaysia. This is on the grounds that it was appropriate in others industries. For example, a study by Wang (2013) in Taiwan among the food and beverage employees found that career competency was moderately related to career satisfaction. However, in a study conducted by Perrachione (2008) among school teachers, employees retention was caused more by their satisfaction with their profession rather than by their job related duties of teaching. Yeh (2009) suggested that newly graduated nurses ought to be catered with a supportive working environment and continuous training to boost their competencies and thus, avoiding turnover. In Malaysia, Fong (2013) suggested that to reduce intention to leave among employees in furniture manufacturing companies, job related skills training programs should be provided in order to enhance their competency as well as improving their performance thus, reducing occupational stress. Perhaps, the result obtained in previous studies in terms of job related competency will have the same impact in the Malaysian spa industry since it was also found positively related to Thailand's spa industry (Wetprasit, 2006).

Communication competency is not just limited to listening and speaking (Waldeck, 2012). Customers have become more demanding and they are more attracted to companies that have good presentation of their products and services; easily understandable presentation, highly relevant information, interactive and media-rich presentation (Waldeck, 2012). Thus, this study should focus on communication competency as an important variable that can influence intention to stay mediates by job satisfaction amongst spa therapists in Malaysia. To support this, past studies have also found communication to have a strong relationship with organizational

commitment (Postmes, 2001). It was discovered that informal communications among the workers were less related to commitment in organization as compared to employees' psychological job outcomes and job satisfaction. In a study conducted in Malaysia among SMEs, job satisfaction was found to be significantly related to turnover when the factor of communication was incorporated (Emami, 2012). Other studies found that job satisfaction should be considered as a mediating role between communication competency and retention (Perrachione, 2008; Karavardar, 2013; Hofaidhllaoui, 2104). Thus, it is intriguing to find out whether the communication competency among spa therapists in Malaysia has a relationship with intention to stay among the workers.

Instead of hard (job related) and soft (communication and interpersonal) skill, a spa therapist should have a connection in their mind, body and spirit (Global Spa & Wellness Summit, 2012). It is important to have the passion in doing the job, and the "spa feeling" would influence the power and also to have the benefit of the human touch. It is also important for a spa therapist to establish solid skills of competencies and personalities to meet today's' working demands, especially when dealing with clients who are living in stressful environments. Personality is an important factor that could predict someone's compatibility and job satisfaction which will influence their intention to stay in the company (Levy, 2011). The consequences of a matched personality is possible so as it can possibly influence a worker's job satisfaction and organizational commitments and hence, reducing the turnover (Eckhardt, 2014). A concern of the personality trait as a variable should be taken into consideration in order to predict the worker's intention to stay mediates by job satisfaction among the spa therapists in Malaysia. A spa therapist is found to be synonymous with a pleasant

personality such as amiable (Capellini, 2010). Possessing an amiable personality is described as someone who is cooperative, compassionate, warm, a listener and a negotiator (Merrill, 1999). This is in line with the agreeableness personality trait of the Big Five personality which is defined as being sympathetic, considerate, friendly, warm, compassionate, and behave in giving way as determined by Costa & McCrae (1992).

The correlation between personality, job satisfaction and intention to stay from previous studies showed inconsistencies between the industries. The Big Five personality trait of agreeableness showed a significant relationship towards the turnover intention among the university staffs in Uganda (Mayende, 2014). The effect of this relationship was in line with Gumussoy (2016) that pertained that the agreeableness, conscientiousness and openness to experience personality traits as important determinants of Turkey's Information Technology (IT) personnel's intention to stay. Unfortunately, agreeableness personality is only reflected among the system administrators as compared to other positions in the IT department that is significantly related with the turnover (Eckhardt, 2014). In the past, there were many studies conducted on the intention to stay in relation to different context and industry but less study is conducted to determine whether a personality is an important factor to determine the intention to stay among spa therapists in Malaysia.

Based on past studies, it can be concluded that the factors of job related competency, communication competency, and personality traits can influence job satisfaction and intention to stay among the spa therapists. However, the results from previous studies

showed slightly different outcomes from each other. This is due to the fact that the previous studies were conducted in different areas and industries and less research had been done in the spa industry, specifically in Malaysia. Therefore, it will be interesting to find out whether the agreeableness personality type of spa therapists in Malaysia can be related to their job satisfaction and intention to stay in the spa businesses.

### **1.3 Research Objective**

According to Sekaran (2013), a research objective is described as a purpose of the study, which provides a clarification to a problem encountered in the work setting in most applied research. Past studies indicated that factors such as job related competency, communication competency, agreeableness personality are significantly related to job satisfaction and thus can lead to the intention to stay. Thus, the issues occurred in the spa industry has drive this study in the attempt to:

1. To examine the relationship between job satisfaction and intention to stay among Malaysian spa therapists.
2. To examine the relationship between job related competency and job satisfaction among Malaysian spa therapists.
3. To examine the relationship between communication competency and job satisfaction among Malaysian spa therapists.
4. To examine the relationship between agreeableness and job satisfaction among Malaysian spa therapists.

5. To examine the relationship between job related competency and intention to stay among Malaysian spa therapists.
6. To examine the relationship between communication competency and intention to stay among Malaysian spa therapists.
7. To examine the relationship between agreeableness and intention to stay among spa therapists in Malaysia.
8. To examine the mediating effects of job satisfaction on the relationship between job related competency and intention to stay among Malaysian spa therapists.
9. To examine the the mediating effects of job satisfaction on the relationship between communication competency and intention to stay among Malaysian spa therapists.
10. To examine the mediating effects of job satisfaction on the relationship between agreeableness and intention to stay among Malaysian spa therapists.

#### **1.4 Research Questions**

Research questions are defined as a guide for the process of obtaining and analyzing information in which to assist in achieving the purpose of the study (Sekaran, 2013). It is also summarized as the interpretation of the problem into a specific requirement for information. Thus, based on the gaps discussed in the literature, the following research questions were addressed for this study:

1. What is the relationship between job satisfaction and intention to stay among spa therapists in Malaysia?



2. What is the relationship between job related competency and job satisfaction among spa therapists in Malaysia?
3. What is the relationship between communication competency and job satisfaction among spa therapists in Malaysia?
4. What is the relationship between agreeableness and job satisfaction among spa therapists in Malaysia?
5. What is the relationship between job related competency and intention to stay among spa therapists in Malaysia?
6. What is the relationship between communication competency and intention to stay among spa therapists in Malaysia?
7. What is the relationship between agreeableness and intention to stay among spa therapists in Malaysia?
8. Does job satisfaction mediate the relationship between the job related competency and intention to stay of the Malaysian spa therapists?
9. Does job satisfaction mediate the relationship between the communication competency and intention to stay among the Malaysian spa therapists?
10. Does job satisfaction mediate the relationship between agreeableness and intention to stay among the Malaysian spa therapists?

## **1.5 Research Hypotheses**

Hypothesis is a tentative statement that indicates the expectation in the empirical data (Sekaran, 2013). The research problem has motivated this study to develop

research hypotheses. The research hypotheses are generated from previous literature studies which will be discussed in chapter two. The hypotheses are as the following:

- H1 : Job satisfaction has positive relationship towards intention to stay among spa therapists in Malaysia.
- H2 : Job related competency has positive relationship towards job satisfaction among spa therapists in Malaysia.
- H3 : Communication competency has positive relationship towards job satisfaction among spa therapists in Malaysia.
- H4 : Agreeableness has positive relationship towards intention to stay among spa therapists in Malaysia.
- H5 : Job related competency has positive relationship towards intention to stay among spa therapists in Malaysia.
- H6 : Communication competency has positive relationship towards intention to stay among spa therapists in Malaysia.
- H7 : Agreeableness has positive relationship towards intention to stay among spa therapists in Malaysia.
- H8 : Job satisfaction mediates the relationship between job related competency and intention to stay among spa therapist in Malaysia.
- H9 : Job satisfaction mediates the relationship between communication competency and intention to stay among spa therapist in Malaysia.
- H10 : Job satisfaction mediates the relationship between agreeableness and intention to stay among spa therapist in Malaysia.

## **1.6 Significance of the Study**

This study basically aims at examining the relationship between jobs related competency, communication competency and agreeableness towards intention to stay which are mediated by job satisfaction. Findings from this study may be of utmost importance particularly for the academicians and policy makers. This study benefited spa operators, spa managers, and spa owners in managing their outfit, human capital development especially in the ever changing environment of the spa businesses, specifically in Malaysia. In terms of the recruitment process, the study beneficial to human resource managers to determine agreeableness personalities are required for potential spa therapists which matches the demand of the career.

The importance of having a good skills and competencies such as the job related and communication also be of concerned on whether it can contribute to spa operators and spa managers during the employee selection in the recruitment process. In addition, the policy makers, especially the government of Malaysia in the effort to invest funds in producing skilful talents through the Malaysia skills certificate program (SKM) would get some insights by considering the value-added skills into the program. The tertiary education provider such as universities can also benefit in terms of considering to develop necessary skills-based courses at higher level such as diploma and bachelor levels if the competencies factors is significant towards the spa therapists' intention to stay. To sum up, the findings of this study benefits to human resource managers, spa operators and spa owners, and policy makers since they can avoid investment costs in terms of training and development.

Specifically for academicians, this study represented the efforts made to develop a conceptual framework of the relationship between spa therapists' competencies and agreeableness towards their intention to stay mediates by job satisfaction. Basically, it provided the ground work in integrating two disciplines which are: organizational behaviour and human resources theories in the spa industry. It provided different integrated views of the factors that were previously researched on the relationship between agreeableness personality trait, job related and communication competency and the intention to stay.

This study also looked into job satisfaction by taking into consideration the Herzberg dual theory as a mediator in the relationship between agreeableness personality, job related and communication competency and the intention to stay. Thus, this study is useful for both the spa operators and academicians to deeply understand about personality traits specifically in Malaysia's spa therapist's intention to stay and also to the human resources practice theories. It also attempted to add on to the existing literature and render support for the past theories on the mediating effect of job satisfaction that impacted on the competencies and personality traits towards the intention to stay. Past researches carried out studies to determine the state of job satisfaction in other industries such as education (Kabungaidze, 2013), Herzberg's application theory in determining job satisfaction in Malaysia, especially in the spa industry as compared to other industries in Malaysia such as retailing (Tan, 2011) and education (Hashim, 2011) were different due to the social and cultural factors. In order to achieve the objectives of the Malaysian Economic Transformation Program (ETP) under the EPP 9a, this study aided in determining the causes of employees' turnover in the Malaysian spa businesses thus could be useful towards

addressing issues of the lack of therapist expertise and the spa quality as mentioned in the EPP 9a.

Furthermore, the research on agreeableness personality trait, job related and communication competency and intention to stay among spa therapists in Malaysia is still limited and thus there is more to be explored. Subsequently, this study is able to provide and contribute some insights to the spa industry in Malaysia on how they can enhance the spa business operation in Asia since it can contribute to the economic growth and development, potentially in Malaysia, as well as globally.

### **1.7 Scope of the Study**

The scope of this study covered spa therapists working in the hotels and resort spas in Malaysia. Quantitative primary data were obtained on job related competency, communication competency, and agreeableness personality. In addition, job satisfaction which measured the spa therapist's degree of fit will be the mediating variable that can mediate the impact of job related competency, communication competency, and agreeableness personality on the intention to stay. The respondents for this study consisted of spa therapists engaged in the hotel and resort spas in Malaysia which are registered with the Ministry of Tourism and Culture Malaysia (MOTAC) and consisted of all states in Malaysia and are grouped into five clusters, representing the five major zones focus areas that are central, eastern, southern, and northern of peninsular Malaysia and the Eastern Malaysia (Sabah and Sarawak). This is a statistical study and the research tested the ten hypotheses identified under the research objectives using quantitative techniques such as the SPSS and Smartpls 3.0.

## **1.8 Limitations of the Study**

One of the limitations of the study is that the respondents were chosen among spa therapists from 103 certified spa hotel and resorts registered by the Ministry of Tourism and Culture throughout Malaysia. There are still a number of spa businesses that have not taken part or become a member of the Malaysian Spa Association and the Ministry of Tourism and Culture although the businesses are registered with the Malaysia Company Commission. Furthermore, the respondents for this study consisted of therapists who work with the hotel and resort spas while other categories of spa did not take part.

Therefore, samples were collected from only Malaysian spa therapists and limited to the 103 certified spas by the Malaysia Ministry of Tourism and Culture. This study has also a limited number of spa therapist respondents and therefore, future findings that not be suitable to be used in other spa job position i.e. spa managers, spa directors and spa owners due to the different levels of knowledge and expertise between the spa therapists and other job positions in the spa industry.

## **1.9 Definitions of terms**

Terms used in this study are operationally defined so that the bases upon which the researchers carried out is understood. The sources of definitions are clearly stated and become the foundations to finding or developing acceptable measures.

### **1.9.5 Personality**

Personality is described as the sum total of someone unique psychophysical system in which they react to their environment (Judge, 2015). It is the combination of characteristics or qualities that form an individual's distinctive character.

### **1.9.7 Effective Recruitment**

Effective recruitment refers to a good hiring practices to increase workers motivation to stay longer by considering the candidate's understanding of the job role, the technical skills, and the best fit personality during the selection process (Cohen, 2008; Branham, 2005).

### **1.9.8 Spa**

Places accommodate with the overall wellness facilitates and a variety of professional services that stimulate the renewal of mind, body and spirit. (The International Spa Association, ISPA).

### **1.9.9 Spa Therapist**

Spa workers that have specific licensing requirements that is provided by the accredited spa, beauty, massage or other health practitioner education to perform spa treatment (Cohen, 2008).

### **1.9.10 Hotel and Resort Spa**

A hotel or resort spa is owned by and situated within a resort or hotel property and caters for professionally administered spa services, fitness and wellness components, and spa cuisine menu choices (International Spa Association, 2006).

## **1.10 Organization of the Thesis**

The first chapter of this study focuses on the background of the spa industry in Malaysia and the importance of its contribution to Malaysia's economy. It also explained the relevance of the spa industry within Malaysia. This chapter also includes the background of the study, research problems, research objectives, research hypothesis, significance of the study, the overview of research methodology, definition used in the study and the limitations. The problem statement provides the foundation of the study, and the knowledge of the gaps which need to be addressed. The research questions, objectives and significance of the study have been developed based on the gaps. The operational definitions of the terms used in this study and limitations are clearly stated.



Chapter 2 reviews the past and existing empirical works in the area of talent management and human resources which is specifically related to the relationship between job related competency, communication competencies and personality traits towards the intention to stay and the mediating effects of job satisfaction in spas and tourism as well as related industries. This chapter also examines the definitions and theories pertaining to this study. It also determines the scenario of the spa industry, the development, type of spa and the spa therapist profession. Subsequently, the theoretical background and the definition of the variables had been explored. This chapter also determines the gap between past studies and the application of the framework as to develop the hypothesis testing.

Chapter 3 addresses the research methodology on how the development been formed, data collection methods, questionnaire design and measurement of the research variables and statistical techniques used in analysing the data. This chapter also determines the research methodology used to explore the techniques of data analysis and to examine the relationship between job related competencies, communication competency and agreeableness personality with job satisfaction as the mediator variable towards spa therapist intention to stay. A pre-test was done to test the instruments of the study.

Chapter 4 presents the descriptive analysis, hypotheses testing, result of the study and the key findings. This chapter also explains the assessment, techniques that include data collection process, biasness in the survey, data screening, the profile of respondents, descriptive statistics, testing of normality, multicollinearity test,

measurement model analysis using SmartPLS, Structural model assessment, and the summary of hypothesis testing.

Chapter 5 which is the last chapter offers detailed discussion on findings; research implications, limitations and suggestions for future research and, a conclusion.

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